

# **The significance of the Employer Brand in the ground handling business**

## **Case: Ground handling company X**

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<p><b>Abstract:</b></p> <p>The aim of this study was to investigate how employees in the ground handling business at Helsinki-Vantaa airport perceives the employer brand and what aspects can support the early recruitment process. The main research question was to examine if a different employer brand strategy was needed for different departments to create an employer brand model for company X. Also the employer value proposition (EVP) was studied to see if it affects an applicant's first choice of employer in the early recruitment process. Ambler and Barrow introduced the psychological agreement between employee and employer as a first step in creating the employer brand. Backhaus &amp; Tikoo presented a visual theory where they distinguished between internal and external factors in attracting employees and employee retention. Today employer brand is considered extremely important for successful business' and is much more complex. The study was conducted in January 2020 and a quantitative research method was used. The author used an already validated employer brand measurement instrument designed by Berthon et. al (2005) to conduct the study. The main result of the study indicated that no differences were found between groups and therefore, there is no need to create separate employer brand strategy for the departments. In general soft values such as interest and social values were considered very important for the employees. To conclude an employer brand model was created for company X where internal and external communication plays a key role in building the employer brand in order to create employee loyalty and employer attraction. This study was limited to one company, industry and geographical location and should therefore not be generalized to other business' and industries as such.</p>	
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# 1 INTRODUCTION

In recent years, public discussion has increased about the ongoing changes in labor market (digitalization) and the labor shortage some industries will face (i.e. health sector) due ageing population and decreasing childbirth figures. This will have an effect on labor market conditions and the economy both globally and in Finland. According to this demographic trend companies will face competition in employing top talent for open positions and create a “war” for skilled workforce. It is also important to remember the individual’s role, both social and psychological (psychological contract between employer and employee) in this changing labor market. (Myrskylä 2012, Hakala 2018).

Since, the changes in labor market have created this war for talent many companies are facing difficulties in finding top talent, keep their top talent and differentiate themselves from competitors and therefore many companies have focused on building the employer brand together with human resources and marketing departments in order to lure the best applicants and create a positive brand image of the company.

The employer brand is a twenty-year-old term first mentioned by Barrow and Ambler in 1996 where they discuss that brand thinking should also be applied in the employment context. At this time employer branding was understood by using marketing terms and being part of marketing strategies (Ambler & Barrow 1996). In its twenty year old path employer branding has become to be a major tool for human resource management together with marketing and communication departments to differentiate companies from one another and to attain the best talent for open positions and to retain commitment employees through EVP, employee value proposition (Mei-Pichtler et al. 2014). According to Universum Global’s research employer branding will be an important issue for the next five years where survey results indicate that an even stronger cooperation between HR-, marketing-, employer branding department and CEO is required among stakeholders to achieve an even stronger employer brand. Survey results also show that in the next five years focus will be on long-term recruitment needs, unifying the consumer- and employer brand and to build an employer brand on a global level (Universum Global). According to research, Universum Suomi 2017 argues that the employer

brand image has a huge impact on the success of recruiting and a majority of survey respondents would increase budgeting for building the employer brand.

In the aviation business airlines have built strong brands for decades, mostly featuring their services and created a strong brand via different social media platforms and customer loyalty programs. Less focus has been placed on ground among companies who perform ground handling for these airlines including customer service on ground (arrival and departure procedures), ramp services (loading, unloading and de-icing procedures) in the aspect of creating an employer brand. Worldwide known companies in the ground handling business are i.e. Swissport, Menzies, in the Nordics Aviator and in Finland Airpro. Equally, the way work is performed has also changed in the ground handling business where digitalization has diminished the need for actual staff performing the job. However, in a Finnish context it is not until recently these ground handling companies have created i.e. Instagram accounts in the aspect of actually starting to build an employer brand in order to hire and retain top talent and secure ground handling deals with airlines operating in Finland.

This worldwide competition in the labor market has led companies to rethink their strategies and recruitment process to attract and retain skilled workforce. This has led to new ways of communicating and attracting employees and new tools are being developed by involving branding and marketing theories in the recruitment process. Concepts such as employer brand, employer reputation and employer image have become very important for successful businesses. (Franca & Pahor 2012, Moroko & Uncles 2008).

## **1.1 Background and need**

The employer brand has been a hot topic worldwide in recent years, where the last years have shown tremendous changes in the labor market and created a need for companies to strengthen their brands in order to hire and retain top skilled employees. Employer brand is still a relatively new theory with roots in product and service branding and has been studied to some extent in the last years mainly from the perspective of the internal employer brand i.e. employee retention and how the employer is perceived among employees, hence less focus have been on the external employer brand. (Franca & Pahor

2012). In a Finnish context this phenomenon has not been studied in a larger scale and therefore the author finds it relevant to examine and narrows it down to one industry; aviation. As already mentioned, airlines have built strong brands, but less research have been conducted in the aspect of ground handling for these airlines. Hence, this thesis will study how a ground handling company delivers the employer brand from the employees' perception in order to find out what characteristics of the employer brand are important for the employee in order to convert that result into the early stages of recruitment in attracting top applicants.

## **1.2 Aim and research questions**

This thesis will focus on employer branding in the ground handling business. The research questions mentioned in the next subchapter will study the research problem from the perspective of employees working for a ground handling company and especially how they perceive the employer brand and how it can support the HR department in recruiting activities. Hence, the aim of this study is to conduct a study among one ground handling company operating at Helsinki-Vantaa airport and study the employer brand of this company from the employees perspective. In this thesis the studied company will be named Company X, since the organization does not want its name to be published. The study conducted will focus on both internal and external employer brand and how the employee perceives this in the aspect of job satisfaction, motivation and what characteristics where important when applying for the open position and how management can use the results of the study to optimize the recruitment process and attain the best talent for open positions.

The subsidiary aim of this thesis is to find out how employees experience the employee value proposition (EVP) and how important they find it in the recruitment process to consider the specific company for an employer candidate of choice.

This study will answer the following research questions:

- **Is there a difference in how different age groups / department in organization perceive the employer brand in company X?**
  - Should there be a different employer brand strategy for different departments?
- **How do current employees perceive the case company's employer brand and what values can be converted into the recruitment process?**
  - What is the employer brand vision of the company?
- **Does the EVP (employee value proposition) affect the employees first choice of employer in the early stage of recruitment?**
  - Does the external employer brand affect the reasons why a specific company is first choice for a job applicant?

By answering these research questions this study aims to give the reader and insight in the importance of an employer brand in the ground handling business and how the employees identify the employer brand and how it results in job satisfaction, motivation, retention and how the result can be adapted to the recruitment process.



## 2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In the theoretical part of this study the author will examine prior studies done around employer branding and present theories through other researchers in order to build an understanding of the topic and examine studies that correlate to the research questions of this study. The first section of the theoretical part will discuss the employer brand as a phenomenon, from where it all started to what it is today. This section will also look into how to define a successful employer brand. The second section of the theoretical part will focus on human resource management (HR), how employer branding affects the recruitment process, the development of the employer value proposition (EVP) and how companies find talented and committed employees in the fierce competition of skilled workforce.

Definition of the employer brand:

*“Is the use of a branding strategy to influence the way present and potential employees view the employing organization. The aim is to develop a coherent employer or employment brand, comprising a package of financial, economic, psychological, and symbolic elements that in combination improve the ability to recruit and retain staff. Employer branding is associated with a desire to become an employer of choice and compete effectively in the war for talent” – Oxford Reference 2019*

*“The main role of employer brand is to provide a coherent framework for management – to simplify and focus priorities, increase productivity and improve recruitment, retention and commitment” – Ambler & Barrow 1996*

### 2.1 The employer brand

For decades companies have built brands and brand awareness among its products and services in order to differentiate itself from its competitors. (Kotler & Keller 2011) Today, as the world becomes more digitalized it is of enormous importance that companies rethink their view on building their brand strategies to also include the employees. According to Mei-Pichtler et al. (2014) employees today are an immense asset for companies as brand ambassadors and therefore companies should set up a strategy for employer branding as to get insight in why potential employees would choose a specific company and what the company has to offer potential employees and how to retain current

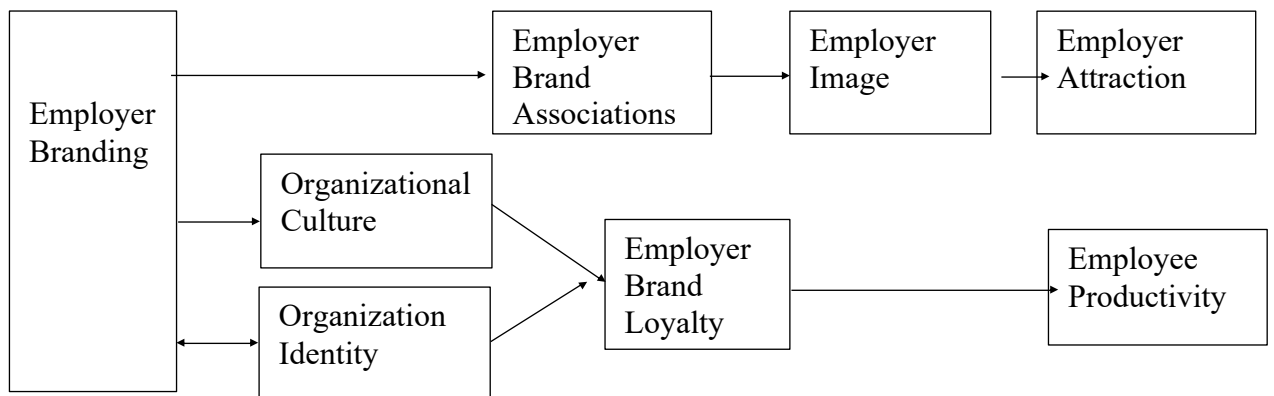
employees. Mei-Pichtler et al. (2014) also underlies that corporate branding, product/service branding and employer branding should become a one brand where the employees are the power of a successful business.

### **2.1.1 Defining the employer brand**

However, even though the employer brand has been discussed widely in the past years and has become a generally understood concept it is still a relatively new theory that was first mentioned in research/literature in 1996 by Ambler and Barrow. The authors discuss in their paper *"The Employer brand"* the influence between brand management techniques and human resource management (HR) where common marketing terms should be implemented in creating the employer brand. (Ambler & Barrow 1996). Ambler and Barrow further discuss the value of relationship management in order to build an employer brand where internal and external factors (employees and customers) co-exist in creating a long-term relationship that benefits both consumer and company. Relationship management is seen as creating trust and commitment among all stakeholders by developing a supportive organizational culture, internal marketing, understand customer expectations and unite and reward employees in a way that benefits customer retention. (Buttle 1996). In the end of the 1990s employer branding was conceptualized as practical (personal development), economical (rewards) and psychological (belongingness) employment benefits and it can be developed in a similar way as a product brand. (Ambler & Barrow 1996).

Employer branding became more popular after the new millennium and more studies have been done in the field since then and the understanding that the employer brand strongly indicates the relationship between existing and future employees arose. According to Sullivan (2004) more companies became aware that a well-built employment brand was beneficial for their business as a well-managed company and a great place to work. Furthermore, Sullivan (2004) says: *"Employment branding is a targeted, long-term strategy to manage the awareness and perceptions of employees, potential employees, and related stakeholders with regards to a particular firm"*. Also, Backhaus and Tikoo (2004) claim that not much research has been done concerning employer branding and underlines that a well-managed employer brand is the key to differentiate your company from competitors.

In 2004 Backhaus and Tikoo saw that there was a lack of academic research done regarding the employer brand and set out to present a theoretical foundation for the employer brand and to illustrate the relationship between management and marketing concepts. Their goal was to present an agenda where employer branding becomes an effective practice for human resource management. In *figure 1* Backhaus and Tikoo (2004) present their findings about the two most important factors of employer branding where they distinguish between internal and external dynamics affecting how employees perceive the employer brand. Potential employees create the employer image on the basis of the associations arising from the employer brand. The employer image affects the attractiveness of the organization from the perspective of potential employees. The lower effect chain focuses on existing employees of an organization. A strong connection between employee productivity and commitment can be drawn from the lower effect chain where also organizational culture and organizational identity are key factors for creating the employer brand. (Backhaus & Tikoo 2004).



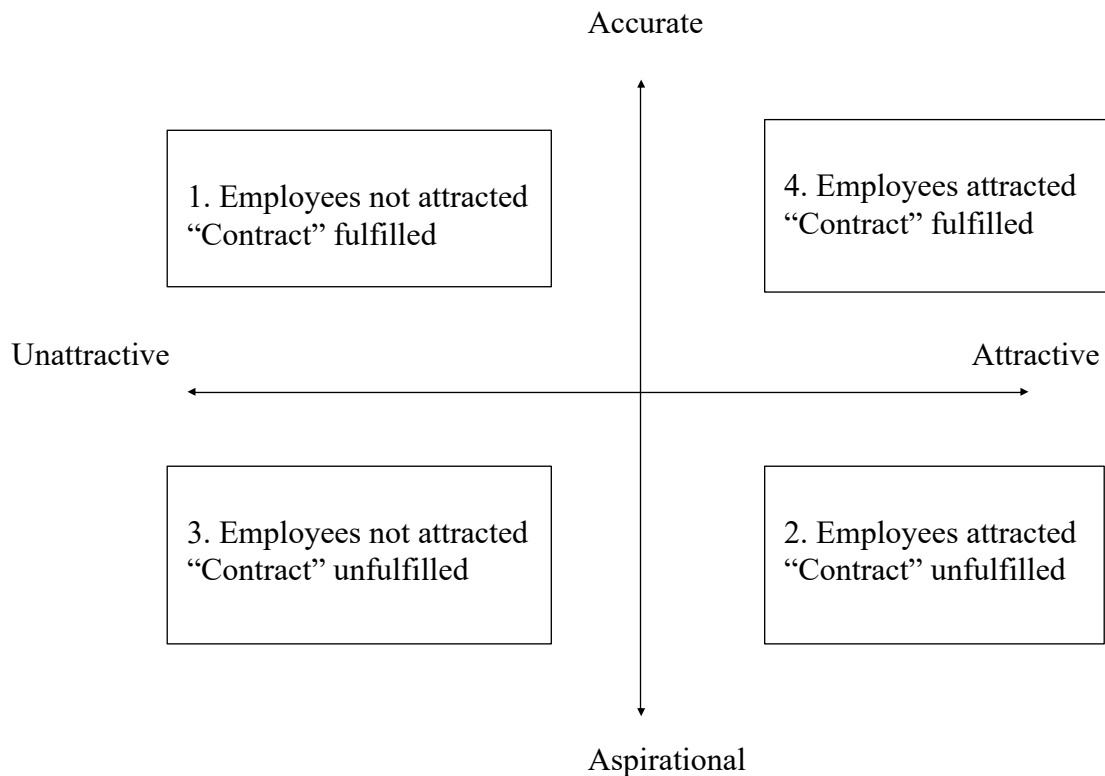
*Figure 1. Theoretical framework of employer branding Backhaus & Tikoo 2004 (re-captured by the author)*

Backhaus and Tikoo (2004) conclude their study by giving managers the advice to use employer branding as an umbrella under which they can store employee retention activities together with recruitment activities to make a coordinated human resource strategy in order to better manage the different channels and create a strong competitive advantage towards other organizations.

Later research has shown that the best practice for successful employer brand management is a well-structured and coordinated effort between human resource management, marketing and communication departments. (Barrow & Mosley 2005, Heilman et al. 2013, Khalid & Tariq 2015). According to Barrow and Mosley (2005) a strong employer brand is crucial for maintaining and acquiring top talent and benefits companies in reducing recruitment costs, sick leaves and turnover of employees. Moreover, this gives organizations better profits and results in customer satisfaction measurements. (Barrow & Mosley 2005). Also Johnson and Roberts (2006) have conceptualized the main elements behind employer branding and present four different factors that influence the employer brand; positioning (in comparison to your competitor), personality (organizations value and vision), promise (set expectations for candidates and employees) and message (communication of values/goals/benefits). These elements are strongly marketing based and already Ambler and Barrow (1996) mentioned the personality aspect in their study. The research done by Johnson and Roberts (2006) also corresponds well with the results of Backhaus and Tikoo (2004) study where the promise influences the psychological agreement, which Backhaus and Tikoo (2004) claim is one essential factor in employer branding.

### **2.1.2 Successful employer branding**

Many organizations strive for a successful employer brand, but according to Moroko and Uncles (2008) no empirical studies have been conducted in identifying successful or failed employer brands. The authors are also sceptic to the fact that consumer branding activities could be transformed to match employer branding as a whole. (Moroko & Uncles 2008). Moroko and Uncles (2008) believe that: *“unlike consumer and corporate branding, however the central concern and primary target market of the employer brand is current and prospective employees of the employing firm”*. In the study done by Moroko and Uncles (2008) they strive to determine the essential elements of successful/failed employer branding (see figure 2) by interviewing HR-, marketing- and communication professionals.



*Figure 2. The dimensions of successful/failed employer branding Moroko & Uncles 2008 (re-captured by the author)*

*Figure 2* presents the results of the study conducted by Moroko and Uncles (2008) where two main elements for successful/failed employer brand is shown. The horizontal dimension, unattractive – attractive. This dimension is strongly based on consumer brand theories where awareness and differentiation from competitors are key factors. The vertical dimension represents accuracy – aspirational, where the key characteristics are the fulfillment of the psychological agreement and the embracement of the employer brand image. (Moroko & Uncles 2008).

The cells in figure 2 gives an insight in strategic issues a company with employer brands can face:

- Cell 1: Communication breakdown. The company has an attractive employer brand but is not the first choice for potential employees.
- Cell 2: Strategic mismatch. The company attracts the wanted employees but is unable to deliver the correct employee value proposition (EVP) for existing staff.

- Cell 3: Long-term disconnect. The company has a precarious employer brand, is not considered by potential employees and cannot retain current employees.
- Cell 4: Sustained success. The company has a strong employer brand and can attract and retain the wanted employees. (Moroko & Uncles 2008).

However, Moroko and Uncles (2008) believe that existing marketing and branding theories can be valuable knowledge for developing the employer brand. Similar thoughts as Moroko and Uncles (2008) was raised a few years earlier by Sullivan (2004) where he presents his findings for a successful employer brand and includes aspects such as organizational culture, good management, high productivity, acquiring public recognition (great-place-to-work), increase candidate awareness of your best practices and let employees tell stories about the company (brand ambassadors).

Many believe that being a successful company today requires efforts in building the employer brand, to create strong company cultures and values in order to attract this generation's top talent. Digitalization and social media have blended the balance between work and free time and created a whole new meaning for the employer brand. (Mei-Pichtler et al. 2014, Sinclair 2018, Rantanen 2019). Even though one can find the same basis for employer branding today that was already studied in the early years of this century with internal/external factors (organizational culture), communication, psychological agreement (trust and commitment) and employee productivity (Bauhaus & Tikoo 2004, Moroko & Uncles 2008, Johnson & Roberts 2006) HR companies and marketing experts have presented new models for creating the employer brand.

Boston consulting group (BCG) have created an employer branding model that combines internal and external perspectives (*see figure 3*). According to Mei-Pichtler et al. (2014) employee motivation guides employer branding where the key factor is to attract and retain top talent where the company must appeal to both logic and emotion. The authors further discuss that an open dialogue between HR, marketing and strategy departments is vital in creating the employer brand where communications and brand experience together with internal and external factors create the employer brand. The authors of the BCG model consider that the employer brand is much more complex than the early models of employer branding. (Mei-Pichtler et al. 2014).

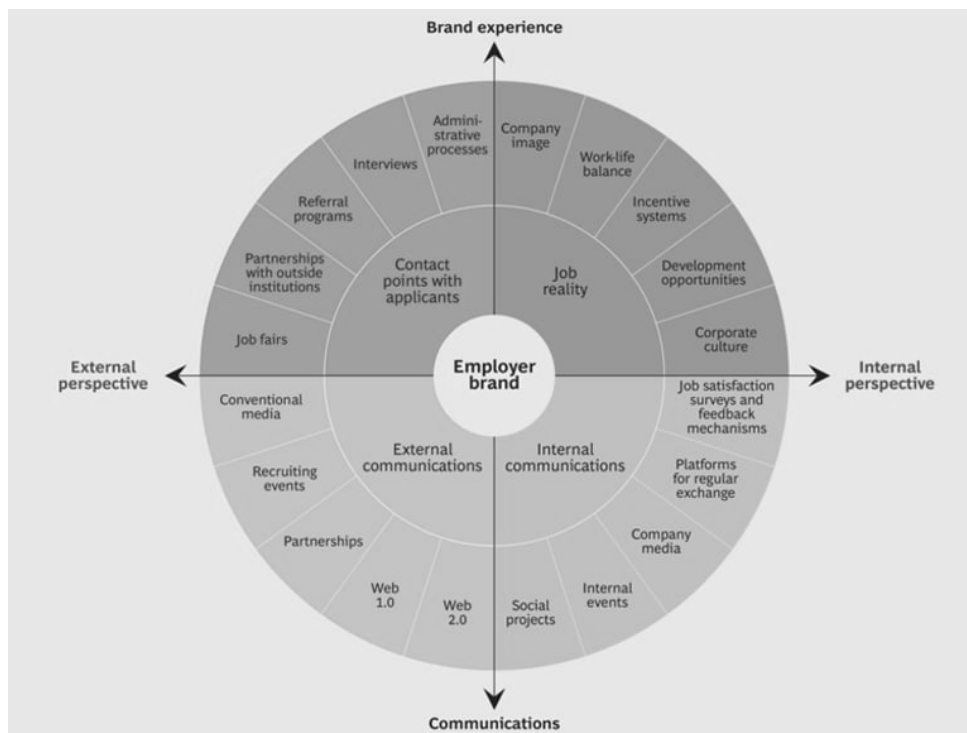


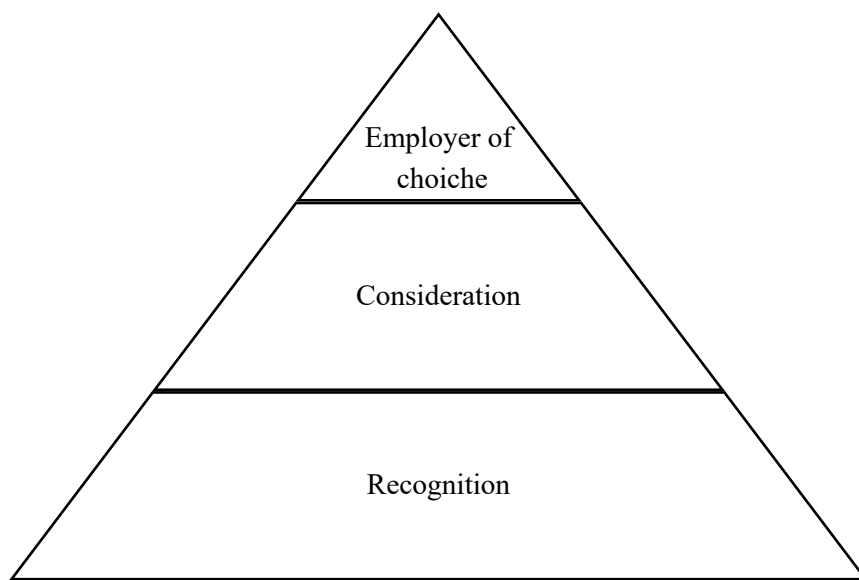
Figure 3. Employer branding combines Internal and External Perspectives BCG analysis 2014 (re-captured by the author)

## 2.2 How the employer brand affects potential applicants

As mentioned earlier if a company wants to be successful the employer brand has to be understood and collaborated within the whole organization and between all stakeholders. (Barrow & Mosley 2005, Heilman et al. 2013, Khalid & Tariq 2015). An effective employer brand assists companies to attract, motivate and retain employees, and support them to meet key performance indicators such as sales figures, service and increase productivity and therefore has an enormous impact on the business. (Rosethorn 2016). Hence, employer branding is strongly connected with human resource management and one of the main focus areas for successful employer branding is to find top talent for open positions and placing focus on the recruitment process. (Mei-Pichtler et al. 2014).

Recruitment is according to Foot and Hook (2011) one of the most important tasks for human resources. Heilman et al. (2013) specifies in their study that a good external employer brand image correlates to a more efficient recruitment process and is a vital

benefit for employer branding. Also, Backhaus and Tikoo (2004) demonstrates the importance of external marketing in order to attract potential applicants and to support the company's overall brand image. Furthermore, Khalid and Tariq (2015) show the importance of measuring one's recruitment results, because it positively correlates with the employer brand image. Franca and Pahor (2012) have created a pyramid model (*see figure 4*) where they present the strength of the employer brand on three levels; recognition, consideration and employer of choice, how likely potential employees would choose and apply to a specific company.



*Figure 4. The conceptual model of the employer brand pyramid Franca & Pahor 2012 (re-captured by the author)*

According to Franca and Pahor (2012) employer brand image is not a single concept, but a selection of many factors that influence each other. The base of the pyramid represents recognition, the employee identifies the organization as a potential employer (measured by if the employee knows the name of the organization). The middle section, consideration measures if an employee would consider the organization when applying for an open position. The top of the pyramid represents the employer of choice and measures if the employer is the first and only choice for potential applicants. (Franca & Pahor 2012).



Positive employer brand image results in more qualitative applicants, better results on overall job satisfaction and a long-term recruitment strategy. (Heilman et al. 2013, Khalid & Tariq 2015). A successful employer brand additionally correlates to the recruitment process where the recruitment process is considered shorter and more flexible which in turn reflects on lower recruitment costs. It is also understood that when potential applicants are already interested in the organization the recruitment process does not need to start from scratch which in turn decreases the workload of HR and the employer brand is considered valuable when there is no problem filling open positions with good employees. (Heilman et al. 2013).

Today the employer brand is considered a competitive advantage where jobhunters have a vague knowledge and experience of the organization and its culture in the beginning of the recruitment process. Therefore, it is of significance to use basic brand building techniques taken from marketing to present the company and the open positions for applicants. (Eger et al. 2018). Eger et al. (2018) claim that social media is of great importance today when communicating externally with possible applicants and can also save recruitment costs. However, research conducted by Eger et al. (2018) showed that other channels i.e. company website also had a significant role in building the employer brand for possible applicants in search of the ideal employer. Likewise, Franca and Pahor (2012) agrees that information about organizations and open positions should be found through different channels, since it is considered unlikely for applicants to only rely on one source for information research. (Franca & Pahor 2012).

### **2.2.1 Focusing on existing and committed employees**

The other focus area for building a strong employer brand is to focus on existing employees and retain committed workforce through the employer brand.

In business today it is widely agreed upon that employees are an organizations most valuable asset and therefore focus should be placed on retaining committed employees. (Mei-Pichtler et al. 2014, Tanwar & Prasad 2016). Academic research has strongly focused on attracting potential applicants through a strong employer brand. Therefore, Tanwar and Prasad (2016) conducted a study among a big IT-company in India and focused on the employer brand from an existing employee perspective with the aim of

answering questions how the employer brand influences retention of employees and how to make existing employees brand advocates. Tanwar and Prasad (2016) claim that working environment, work-life balance, organizations social responsibility, education and development are focus areas that should be examined more closely in order to understand how these factors affect existing employees in building the employer brand. These factors have been studied by Mei-Pichler et al. (2014) and are presented in the BCG model – one brand (*see figure 3*) where the researchers illustrate all the elements that are connected to the employer brand. The findings from Tanwar's and Prasad's (2016) research show that a strong employer brand reinforces job satisfaction and the fulfillment of the psychological agreement which was already mentioned by Ambler and Barrow (1996). The psychological contract means the agreement between employer and employee, what expectations and requirements they have towards each other. The psychological bond between employer and employee is strongly argued to be a component in job satisfaction and retention of employees. This in turn correlates to committed employees being brand advocates for an organization. (Tanwar & Prasad 2016).

Likewise, Johnson and Roberts (2006) discuss that word-of-mouth has an enormous influence in how the employer is perceived among existing and potential employees. Furthermore, the communication (word-of-mouth) can have both positive and negative impact for the organization and strongly affects the commitment and retaining of employees together with influencing the employer brand both internally and externally. (Johnson & Roberts 2006). In order for the employee to be a brand ambassador she needs to have enough information about the organization's culture and values and therefore, internal marketing and communication is extremely important in brand building. (Tanwar & Prasad 2016). Biwas and Suar (2016) continue the research of the employer brand from the employee perspective and create a three-pillar component of the employer brand based on prior literature, which are: employer brand equity, brand loyalty and commitment and retention of existing and potential employees. The study shows that these components are relevant for the employer brand. Furthermore, the research by Biwas and Suar (2016) confirms that a realistic job description, perceived organizational support, fair reward system, organizational loyalty, management leadership, the psychological contract and social responsibility of the organization all strongly influence the successfulness of the employer brand. All elements that have an influence on the em-

ployer brand also strongly effects the organizations non-financial and financial result. (Backhaus & Tikoo 2004, Moroko & Uncles 2008, Biwas & Suar 2016).

Internal marketing is according to Backhaus and Tikoo (2004) a theoretical base for the employer brand that supports organizations in developing a working environment with committed and loyal employees that is hard for competitors to imitate. This together with the organizational culture and identity further improves employee productivity. According to Mokina (2014) employer brand is part of the corporate brand which includes product brand, social brand and business brand (goodwill) and where the employer brand strongly ties with the product brand. Mokina (2014) further argues that the employer brand is created in order to shape positive impressions about the company as an attractive employer (“best place to work”), to offer retention, attraction, loyalty and staff engagement. A strong product brand emphasizes the employer brand as the most attractive employer and this in turn increases customer and stakeholder satisfaction. As Backhaus and Tikoo (2004) also Mokina (2014) discusses that the employer brand is a way to differentiate companies from competitors by forming positive and unique sets of tangible and intangible benefits of employment conditions i.e. employee value proposition (EVP).

It has been conducted that the employer brand image has several benefits for employees and in daily operations of organizations. According to Heilman et. al (2013) a strong employer brand affects positively on employee retention and increases job satisfaction which in turn shows better results in i.e. customer service and overall performance of a company. Also, Barrow and Mosley (2005) debate that a strong employer brand decreases employee turnover and sick leaves which in turn benefits the company. Therefore, a strong employer brand is a crucial theme for management to get right in order to acquire loyal and committed employees for successful business and employees as brand advocates. (Tanwar & Prasad (2016).

### 2.2.2 The influence of Employee Value Proposition in building the employer brand

In marketing theory value creation is to offer and promise the consumer a product or service that the consumer wants, and the consumer keeps coming back if the promise of the service or product is fulfilled. However, the product or service needs to be developed and changed according to what the consumer wants. The same theory that applies for customer proposition applies to the employee value proposition (EVP) it offers employers the opportunity to capture the benefits of the psychological contract between employer and employee. (Rosethorn 2016). The EVP can according to Mosley (2014) be seen as a strategic tool for employer brand communication and experience. Rosethorn (2016) debates that some definitions of the EVP only focus on the employee, but according to Rosethorn (2016) the employee needs to give value back to the organization as well and therefore the EVP should fulfill the value proposition of both sides. In *figure 5* Rosethorn (2016) explains the employer brand in action and which factors influence a successful employer brand.



*Figure 5 The employer brand in action Rosethorn 2016 (re-captured by the author)*

Rosethorn (2016) further discuss the value of segmentation in creating the EVP since employees have different associations to why they want to work for a specific employer. For one it can be “more of a career” and to the other “more of a job” which include factors such as work-life balance, live to work and want it all. In recognizing and understanding the value of segmentation Rosethorn (2016) debates that organizations can better build their EVP to match what the employees want. The employer brand has been driven by the “war for talent” till now (Rosethron 2016), but according to Universum (2017) study this “war” has ended and therefore also Rosethorn (2016) debates that the employee life-cycle should be taken more into consideration when discussing the employee experience in the employer brand context and in creating the EVP. Like Rosethorn (2016) also Backhaus & Tikoo (2004), Mokina (2014), Heilman et al. (2013) discuss that an organizations culture and values are key factors for building employee loyalty and commitment which strongly creates the “wow” factor for employee experience and in turn create the EVP and a strong employer brand.

Both Mosley (2014) and Rosethorn (2016) indicate that EVP is a management tool that needs to be created in order to achieve a strong employer brand. Rosethorn (2016) describes her theory as the “employer brand journey” where key stages of development are:



Rosethorn (2016) argues that building the employer brand journey requires all stakeholders (senior management, marketing, HR, communication) to be involved in order to build a successful employer brand. In the process mentioned above the EVP is defined in the proposition development and testing phase where management try to capture both

rational and emotional aspects of the employee deal. The final stage of the journey gives ideas of how the successful EVP should be measured i.e. improved employee engagement, advocacy of the organization as an employer, brand guidelines for communication both internally and externally and improved attraction and retention metrics. (Rosethorn 2016).

Mosley (2014) has similar approaches to creating the EVP as Rosethorn (2016). Also, Mosley (2014) discusses that integrating a brand platform requires a HR, marketing, communication and line managers in the development team in order to create a successful brand. In building the EVP the core areas are brand positioning, personality and pillars (“give” and “get” of the employment deal) other aspects include a balance of current strengths and future motivated leadership and investment commitment. A strong EVP also includes organizational culture, values and spirits. It is considered valuable for organizations to redevelop and refresh their EVP every 4-5 years. (Mosley 2014).

### **3 METHODOLOGY**

This chapter will focus on the methodology discussion of the chosen research method. The chosen method has to suit the aim and research questions stated in the research problem. In some cases, different research methods can be used in order to get the best possible results. Generally, the author can choose between the qualitative and quantitative research method. The goal for both qualitative and quantitative research method is to give the reader a better understanding of the society, how individuals and groups work and influence each other. The qualitative research method focuses on how the researcher perceives or interprets information from i.e. an interview, whereas the quantitative research method focuses on how information can be transferred to numbers and amounts i.e. statistical data. (Holme & Solvang 1997, Bryman 2008 & Heikkilä 2014).

### 3.1 Choice of method

The quantitative research method is a study based on quantity and is generally used within social sciences. The data collected in this type of research method is based on figures, percentage and relationships between values. A quantitative study is best suitable for examining a larger group where the researcher wants to find out attitudes and opinions about the target group. (Hirsjärvi et al. 2009, Ejvegård 2003).

The quantitative research method presumes that theoretical concepts can be measurable. Equally it is good to note that both qualitative and quantitative method is built on pre-assumptions that concerns values. In a quantitative research method, the researcher builds assumptions based on theory which then are measured within a sample. The data collected from the sample then needs to be analyzed statistically with the help of figures and tables. (Holme & Solvang 1997, Christensen et al. 2001).

Today the majority of quantitative research is done by an online survey. Benefits for an online survey is that it is cost effective, it can easily reach a big group of people, attractive layout, a quicker response rate and better response on open questions compared to traditional surveys sent by mail. In comparison online surveys may have a low response rate due to motivation to answer the survey, multiple answers and questions of anonymity. (Bryman 2008, Heikkilä 2014).

In this study the author has chosen the quantitative research method, because the aim of the study is to analyze how employees perceive the employer brand and how the results of the study can be converted into the recruitment process in order to hire and attract the most skilled applicants. A quantitative study is most suitable in this case, since the author wants to study a bigger group of people and find out if there are similar views among the studied individuals that can be generalized into a model which the company could use for improving the employer brand.

### 3.2 Online survey

When doing an online survey, it is of great importance to motivate the respondents to answer the survey within the given timeline. Attention has to be given to how the questions in the survey are set up i.e. structure, language and how long the survey is. The researcher also needs to take into consideration how the cover letter of the study is designed in order to motivate a high response rate. The questions in the survey have to be such that everyone in the target group intercepts and understands them in the same way. Firstly, the researcher needs to ask basic questions in order to get background information of the respondents and then move on to more specific case questions that measure attitudes and values. (Holme & Solvang 1997).

Attitudes and values strongly influence behavior and feeling and as such are difficult to measure. Attitudes are often also subconscious and therefore hard to describe (Saleh et al. 2014). Therefore, the author has chosen to use an already validated measurement scale about attitudes/attractiveness towards the employer brand that will give a quantitative (numeric and statistical) result (*see appendix 1*). The measurement scale (25 item measurement instrument) used is designed by Berthon et al. 2005 where the employer brand was measured by “*dimensions of attractiveness in employer branding*”. The 25 items in the study were characterized into five dimensions: social value, development value, application value, interest value and economic value. (Berthon et al. 2005).

The online survey has been split in three clusters by the author (*see appendix 2*); background information, specific questions about the employer brand (Berthon et al. 25 item measurement scale) and a detailed open question why the employee chose the specific organization. To better fit the Finnish speaking target group of the study the author chose to translate the 25-item measurement scale into Finnish. The measurement scale items were translated into Finnish by a native Finnish speaker in order to capture the exact same meaning as in the original item scale.



### 3.2.1 Data collection

As already mentioned, the collection of data was done by an online survey for all company X employees (*see appendix 2*). The benefits by using an online survey is that all employees of the studied organization can be reached, which gives the study amplitude in order for the results to be generalized (Larsen 2009, Heikkilä 2014). The survey link was sent to all company X employees in Finland (n=223) with 117 employees working with passenger service and 97 employees working at ramp services. The survey consists of background questions, open question (free text) and 25 statements that the respondents were able to answer on the Likert-scale (1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=not agreeing or disagreeing, 4=agree, 5=strongly agree). It was essential to use an online survey which gave the respondents total anonymity and where they could honestly state opinions and thoughts.

The author used LimeSurvey to implement the survey. The link to the survey together with a cover letter was sent to company X employees by email. The survey was open for respondents between 20.1.2020-2.2.2020. A reminder email was sent to all employees 27.1.2020 to encourage and motivate the respondents to take part in the survey and to increase the response rate.

The first two sections of the survey were mandatory to answer in order to get the background information of the respondents and the case specific attitudes towards the employer brand on the 25-item measurement scale. The last question in the survey was an open question (free text) and the researcher decided not to make that question mandatory to answer since it might result in people leaving the survey without saving the answers. It was considered more valuable to leave the last question blank so not to miss the actual opinions on the employer brand.

When the survey was closed the total amount of responses were 79 including 12 incomplete answers. Full responses were 67. The response rate for all responses was 35% and for full responses 30% of company X employees (n=223). The result will only be presented on those responses that were completed, n=67.

## 4 FINDINGS

This chapter will present the findings of the empirical study and connect it to the research questions. The result is presented in the upcoming subchapters where the author first presents the demographic information of the survey before continuing to case specific findings about the employer brand.

For a reason unknown the survey had encountered a technical error and some questions were not shown to all participants specifically in the background information questions even though questions were set as mandatory to answer. Therefore, the author will present the result considering the background information with a mark “not displayed” (*see table 1*) and open the responses with a separate figure to get a more truthful picture of the result. However, the case specific questions about the employer brand were not affected by the technical error and the result of those questions will be compared to the background information that was not affected by the error in the survey. In *table 1* those segments (age and department) which are presented in detail in the case specific findings about the employer brand are highlighted.

### 4.1 Background information

As already mentioned, the result is presented by those survey answers that were completed ( $n=67$ ) i.e. those responses that the respondent had finished by pressing “send”. This will not take into consideration if the question was shown to the respondent or not. In *table 1* the result is presented about the background information. As seen the “not displayed” is high in questions considering gender, education and employment duration, therefore those sectors will be looked into more closely to get a more truthful picture of the result. The majority of the respondents are millennials born between 1980-2000 and this group will be examined more closely in the case specific questions about the employer brand to see what this group expects from the employer and how to best attract this age group in recruiting. The result also shows that the majority of respondents 61% work with passenger service for company X. In case specific findings the author will present if there is a difference between those who work with passenger service versus

ramp in how the employer brand is perceived and if the company should set up a different recruiting strategy for the two departments based on the result of this study.

*Respondent demographic characteristics:*

<i>Characteristic</i>	<i>Category</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Gender ( <i>n=67</i> )	Male	12	17,9
	Female	10	14,9
	Other	1	1,5
	Not displayed	44	65,7
Age ( <i>n=67</i> )	Under 20	0	0
	20-29	16	23,9
	30-39	25	37,3
	40-49	11	16,4
	50-59	11	16,4
	60+	1	1,5
	Not displayed	3	4,9
Education ( <i>n=67</i> )	Primary school	1	1,5
	High school/vocational school	27	40,3
	University of Applied sciences	8	11,9
	University/Master's degree	1	1,5
	Other	3	4,5
	Not displayed	27	40,3
Years in the organization ( <i>n=67</i> )	Under a year	0	0
	1-3	10	14,9
	3-5	2	3,0
	5-10	14	20,9
	10+	13	19,4
	Not displayed	28	41,8
Department ( <i>n=67</i> )	Passenger service	41	61,2
	Ramp	26	38,8
	Not displayed	0	0

*Table 1. Background information*

In *table 2* the result is presented by showing the percentage of those respondents to whom the question was shown to. In *table 2* the result shows that 53% of the sample are men which is quite surprising since the majority (61%) work with passenger service which traditionally is a very female orientated field. Therefore, since the result shows that 53% of respondents are men could indicate that the fault in the survey did not show

the question to those who work with passenger service. As seen 67% of the respondents have high school or vocational school as highest level of education. This result mirrors the fact that employees in the ground handling business do not need to have an university degree to apply for an open position. As seen in *table 2* the majority 69% of the respondents have been working for company X for over 5 years. This result indicates that the employees are satisfied and loyal to the company.

*Table 2 of demographic information by question answered sample*

<i>Question</i>	<i>Category</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Gender	Women	44
	Men	53
	Other	3
Education	Primary school	2,5
	High school/vocational school	67
	University of applied sciences	20
	University/Master's degree	2,5
	Other	7,5
Employment duration	Under a year	0
	1-3 years	26
	3-5 years	5
	5-10 years	36
	Over 10 years	33

*Table 2. Demographic information by question answered sample*

*Figure 6* shows age distribution in comparison with the department the respondent work for. The result shows that a majority especially in passenger service are millennials born between 1980-2000. The question “your age” was not shown to three respondents in the survey for an unknown reason and is displayed in the first row in *figure 6*. The result shows that respondents working with ramp services have an even age distribution, whereas those who work with passenger service are millennials aged 20-40.

Crosstabulation age vs. department you work for (n=67)

		Department		
		Passenger Service	Ramp	Total
Age		2	1	3
	20-29	8	8	16
	30-39	18	7	25
	40-49	5	6	11
	50-59	7	4	11
	Over 60	1	0	1
	Total	41	26	67

Figure 6. Crosstabulation between age vs. department you work for

## 4.2 The employer brand

For answering the case specific question about the employer brand, the author has used an already validated measurement scale “25-item *Employer Attractiveness scale*” designed by Berthon et al. 2005. In *table 3* the 25-item scale is presented by mean (n=67) and standard deviation (SD) on Likert scale 1-5. In general, all 25 statements have been found relevant by the respondents especially those statements that considers the overall working environment i.e. “happy work environment and having a good relationship with your colleagues”. Less important were the statements about a humanitarian organization and the possibility to apply what was learned at a tertiary institution. Job security was also seen as an important factor which will be discussed later in this thesis. When concentrating on SD “having a good relationship with your colleagues” had the least deviation from mean 0,58, whereas “an attractive overall compensation package” had the most deviation from mean 1,14. This can be considered quite surprising since this would indicate that the value of EVP is not the most important factor for some employees and could mean they appreciate other things from the employer. Which in turn relates to the recruitment process, if it is necessary to highlight EVP principles in early recruiting or should the focus be more on demonstrating soft values of the workplace i.e. “fun working environment, “exciting environment, happy work environment” which have a SD around 0,64-0,71.

<i>Employer brand Item</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>
Recognition/appreciation from management	4,31	0,63
A fun working environment	4,37	0,71
A springboard for future employment	3,87	0,90
Feeling good about yourself as a result of working for a particular organisation	3,73	0,95
Feeling more self-confident as a result of working for a particular organisation	3,55	0,99
Gaining career-enhancing experience	3,82	0,85
Having a good relationship with your superiors	4,37	0,62
Having a good relationship with your colleagues	4,60	0,58
Supportive and encouraging colleagues	4,34	0,60
Working in an exciting environment	4,27	0,64
Innovative employer – novel work practices/forward-thinking	3,84	0,81
The organisation both values and makes use of your creativity	3,75	0,93
The organisation produces high-quality products and services	4,01	0,81
The organisation produces innovative products and services	3,55	0,84
Good promotion opportunities within the organisation	3,93	0,99
Humanitarian organisation – gives back to society	3,19	1,10
Opportunity to apply what was learned at a tertiary institution	3,01	1,09
Opportunity to teach others what you have learned	3,90	0,82
Acceptance and belonging	4,42	0,63
The organisation is customer-orientated	4,10	0,63
Job security within the organisation	4,37	0,67
Hands-on inter-departmental experience	3,81	0,80
Happy work environment	4,51	0,64
An above average basic salary	4,19	0,87
An attractive overall compensation package	3,61	1,14

*Table 3. 25 item scale mean values and standard deviation*

As mentioned earlier Berthon et. al 2005 had in their study done a factor analysis of the 25-item scale and labeled the 25 items into five different factors: interest value (1), social value (2), economic value (3), development value (4) and application value (5).

Items 10-14 load on factor 1. Items 2, 7-9 and 23 loads on factor 2. Items 15, 21-25 load on factor 3. Items 1, 3-6 load on factor 4. Finally, items 16-20 load on factor 5. (*See appendix 1 for 25-item scale*).

In order to proceed with the analysis an internal consistency analysis was done using Cronbach's Alpha to investigate which factors can be examined more closely. If Cronbach's Alpha is  $> 0.70$  it indicates that the result has enough consistency and one can proceed with creating a sum variable to analyze the result further (*see table 4*).

<i>Factor</i>	<i>Item</i>	<i>Cronbach's Alpha</i>
Interest value (1)	10-14	,841
Social value (2)	2, 7-9, 23	,718
Economic value (3)	15, 21-25	,657
Development value (4)	1, 3-6	,724
Application value (5)	16-20	,611

*Table 4. Internal consistency analysis*

As seen in *table 4* factors 1,2 and 4 have enough consistency and will be examined more closely in comparison with age and work department at company X. A confidence interval test was conducted with factors 1,2 and 4 in comparison with age and department one works for at company X. With a 95% confidence interval the groups are overlapping and therefore no significant difference between the groups could be seen by using a confidence interval calculation. In *table 5* factor mean is calculated together with error of margin with 95% of confidence in consideration with department one works for. In *table 5* PS stands for passenger service and R for ramp.

<i>Factor</i>	<i>Mean PS/R</i>	<i>Margin of error +/- PS/R</i>
Interest value (1)	3,95 / 3,85	0,25 / 0,25
Social value (2)	4,40 / 4,50	0,15 / 0,15
Development value (4)	3,88 / 3,82	0,22 / 0,23

*Table 5. Factor mean with +/- margin in working department*

The author did an analysis of variance (ANOVA) test to see if statistical differences could be found between age groups and working department in consideration to interest-, social- and development value. The result shows that there were no statistically significant differences between the group means as determined by one-way ANOVA, since the p-value is significantly over  $< 0,05$  which if under would mean that there are differences between the groups.

Age:

Interest value	(F(3,59)=,389, <b>p=,761</b> )
Social value	(F(3,59)=1,178, <b>p=,326</b> )
Development value	(F(3,59)=1,468, <b>p=,233</b> )

Department:

Interest value	(F(1,65)=,213, <b>p=,646</b> )
Social value	(F(1,65)=,812, <b>p=,371</b> )
Development value	(F(1,65)=,175, <b>p=,677</b> )

Therefore, no further analysis was done considering employer brand factors since the result demonstrates that no statistically significant differences was found between the groups.

The result of the study further indicates that no statistically significant differences between the groups (age & department) was found when conducting a one-way ANOVA between “job security”, “an above average basic salary” and “an attractive overall compensation package”. Which gives the author reason to believe that in creating and maintaining an employer brand strategy at company X focus should be on communicating an overall joyful image of the workplace and not differentiating between departments or age groups.

#### **4.2.1 Current Employer brand at company X**

In *figure 7* the current employer brand is displayed from the employees perspective. The question was answered on Likert scale 1-5 where top 2 is 4-5, middle is 3 and bottom 2 is 1-2. As seen majority 54% of employees identify that the company’s current employer brand is considered good or very good. On the other hand, 21% considers that the employer brand is poor.



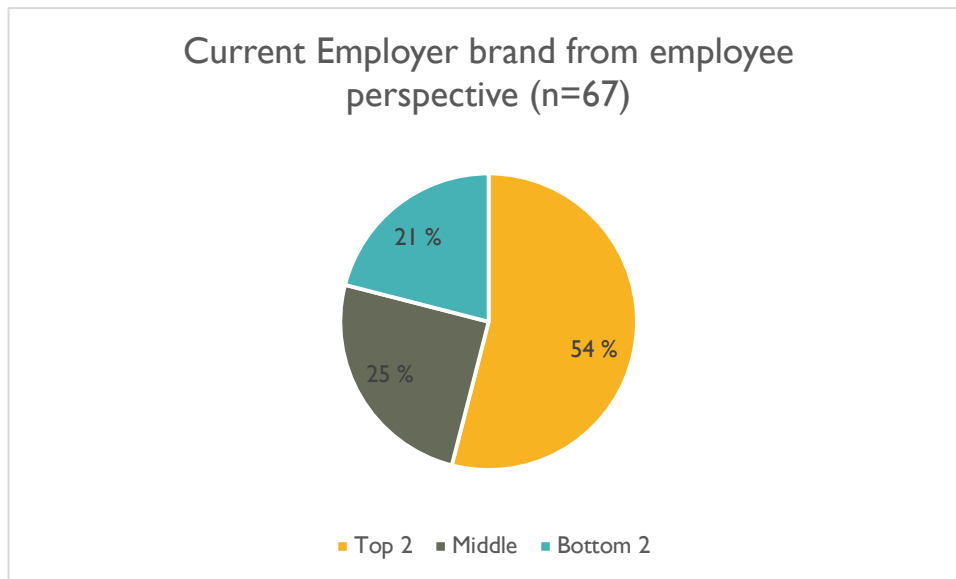


Figure 7. Current Employer brand at company X (based on Likert scale 1-5)

When considering which department the employee works for the result shows that with a 95% confidence interval passenger service employees rate the current employer brand to 3,45 on Likert scale with a range of error between  $\pm 0,3$ . Whereas the result shows that those working with ramp services rate the current employer brand to 3,25 on Likert scale with a range of error between  $\pm 0,4$ . The confidence interval graphs between the different departments overlap which would indicate that there is no significant differences between the groups.

The author did an analysis of variance (ANOVA) test to see if statistical differences could be found between age groups and working department in consideration to current employer brand at company X. The result shows that there were no statistically significant differences between the group means as determined by one-way ANOVA; age ( $F(3,59) = 916, p = ,439$ ). Department ( $F(1,65) = 487, p = ,488$ ). Therefore, the result of the study implies that there is no need for company X to create different employer brand strategies for different working departments. But a clear employer brand strategy should be piloted for the company in order to attain best talent and to keep existing employees happy.

### 4.3 Open question

The open question in the survey was to describe why the employee had chosen Company X as employer. The question was deliberately set as not mandatory since the author did not want respondents to leave the survey without finalizing it due to not wanting to answer the open question. The question was answered by 52% of the respondents (n=67). In the answers a common pattern could be found why current employees had applied for an open position in Company X.

Themes that were repeated in the answers:

- Word of mouth / friends already working there
- Airport is seen as an interesting working environment / international
- Good colleagues
- Corresponds to education
- Lifestyle (possibility to have days off on weekdays)

See *Appendix 3* for all open question answers (in Finnish).

## 5 DISCUSSION

In this chapter the result of the study is connected to literature review about the employer brand. The discussion is based on the aim and research questions of the study. The aim of the study was to focus on existing employees at company X, how they perceive the employer brand and how the result of the study can be converted into the recruitment process and in building the employer brand. The author will first discuss the background information of the respondents and continue with detailed discussion about the employer brand.

## 5.1 Background information

As seen in *table 1* majority of employees are aged between 20-40 so called millennials. This corresponds to the labour market where the leading group of employees worldwide are millennials. Mellanen A & K (2020) who have studied millennials relationship towards working life and written a book about it "*Hyvät pahat miellenniaalit – miten meitä tulisi johtaa*" say millennials want different things from the employer than previous generations. They do not work their whole career at the same company and want more people-oriented management than their seniors. According to Mellanen A & K millennials key factors for work are; work community justice, experiences of success, enjoyable work community, meaningful and inspiring work assignments and a good supervisor. On the other hand, millennials care less about title, competitive spirit at work, organization size and even a high salary was considered less important according to Mellanen A & K. The result of the employer brand study corresponds well with the findings from Mellanen A & K study. As mentioned, millennials are the primary age group at company X and the result of the study shows that soft values such as "a fun and exciting work environment" was considered more valuable than "an above average salary". Millennials will be the major working age group for the next decades and therefore, companies should focus on how to best attract this age group and clearly know what they expect from employers and what values are important for this age group. When companies understand this, they can strengthen the employer brand and focus on which channels to use in order to get the best applicants to apply for an open position.

The result of the study displays that majority of company X employees have been working for the company for over five years which on the other hand does not correspond with the believes of millennials as job hoppers and not loyal to one company. According to Mokina (2014), Backhaus & Tikoo (2004) and Barrow & Mosley (2005) a strong employer brand requires loyal employees among other things. Therefore, the author insinuates that company X already has an employer brand of sort even though not much focus has been placed on actively building an employer brand at company X.

## 5.2 The employer brand

The author finds it somewhat surprising that the result clearly states that no statistically significant differences can be found between groups in consideration to age and which department one works for. When concentrating on the 25-item measurement scale and standard deviation it also confirms that the employees at company X have similar perception and values about the employer brand. On the other hand this result gives company X management a clear understanding on what employees find important in everyday work and what keeps them motivated and satisfied to stay at the company for 3+ years and gives hindsight to management on what aspects to focus on when posting open positions and where top talent can be found. According to the result of the study there is no need for company X to build different employer brand approaches regarding which department one works for. This fact corresponds well with Mei-Pichtler et. al (2014) theory that corporate branding, service branding and the employer brand should become a one brand, where the employees are the power of a successful business. This theory suits very well with the ground handling business, where airline management requires excellent and professional customer service in order to confirm ground handling deals. Therefore, management should introduce staff and show everyday work to potential new airline customers. Of course, in ground handling business money decides a lot on ground handling deals and this is not covered in this thesis.

In previous literature about the employer brand relationship management, organizational culture/identity, communication (internal and external) have been widely discussed in order to build a strong employer brand (Ambler & Barrow 1996, Sullivan 2004, Backhaus & Tikoo). Values such as the above stated was also found in the result of the study, where interest and social values towards company X and aviation in general were considered very important on Likert scale and in the open question why the employee chose company X as employer. The result demonstrates that the employees perceive soft values as very important factors in the organization. Soft values were even considered more valuable than clear EVP related statements, which was quite surprising to the author. In order for company X to strengthen the employer brand management should focus on above mentioned themes and keep in mind that the employer brand ought to be designed and discussed with all stakeholders; HR, marketing and communication as Barrow & Mosley 2005, Heilman et al. 2013, Khalid & Tariq 2015 state.

Since the company is international it would be wise to benchmark what is done abroad and copy those things that work and alter them into a Finnish context. The employer brand is very complex and involves themes such as brand awareness, communications, internal and external perspectives according to the BCG model (*see figure 3*) (Mei-Pichtler et. al 2014). The BCG employer brand wheel contains focus points that were also studied in Berthon et. al (2005) 25 item employer attraction measurement scale which was used in this study. Hence, the author finds the BCG model very supportive for company X to start evaluating their employer brand with and to create methods for best practices in the recruiting process where focus should be on communication i.e. improve company website with clear career opportunities and use employees as brand ambassadors to tell their story about working at company X. Also, presence on social media platforms ought to be more visible and management should consider where to find potential applicants and who to market to. Since the study result demonstrates no higher education is needed for open positions then it would be wise to focus on applicants in fields of vocational studies or 1<sup>st</sup>/2<sup>nd</sup> year students in university of applied sciences. Likewise, Backhaus & Tikoo (2004) and Heilman et. al (2013) discuss the importance of a great external brand image to attract best applicants and to have an effective recruitment process.

As seen in the open question answers quite a few mentioned that they had heard good about the company and that was a reason to apply for work, additionally word-of-mouth appears to be a valid reason to apply for many employees in this industry. Also, Johnson and Roberts (2006) argue that word-of-mouth has an enormous influence in how the employer is perceived among existing and potential employees. The author finds this reason accurate, since the ground handling industry at Helsinki-Vantaa is run by only a few companies where people know each other, and the appeal of the aviation lifestyle is considered high among employees and their friends of friends. The fact that friends of friends have applied for open positions at company X according to the study mirrors well the theory of Heilman et. al (2013) where they conclude that the employer brand is considered valuable when there is no problem filling open positions with good applicants and that the recruitment process eases up by the fact that applicants are already interested in the organization.

The result of the study indicates that there was no difference between groups considering EVP statements. When examining specific statements from the whole sample (n=67) the EVP questions have been rated to 3,61 and 4,19 on Likert scale, whereas job security was rated to 4,37. The standard deviation was close to 1,0 except for job security where SD was 0,67. To the author the result implies that for quite many the EVP (considering salary and compensation package) is not the most important reason for working at company X and employees appreciate other things from the employer such as the overall atmosphere at the workplace especially good colleagues and an exciting work environment. The result of the study reflects the theory of Rosethorn (2016) where the value of segmentation in creating the EVP was discussed in order to understand that different employees have different reasons to work for a company. For some it can be a competitive salary and for others more of a lifestyle to work for a specific company/industry. Also, Backhaus & Tikoo (2004), Mokina (2014) and Heilman et. al (2013) argues that in creating a strong employer brand and EVP the organization culture and values play a significant role in employee loyalty and commitment and create a “wow” factor for employee experience. Therefore, the author believes that the EVP is a secondary aspect for potential employees in the early stage of recruitment and focus should be placed on showing organization culture, values and lifestyle factors for potential employees and as the open question answers state many already knew the company when applying. Of course, later on in the recruitment process EVP values should be discussed together with employees. It is also of great importance that the EVP is displayed to current employees as well and that management should update the EVP process every 4-5 years as Mosely (2014) suggests in his research.

This employer brand study was done before the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic (Covid-19) in spring 2020, therefore one has to remember that the result of the study was not affected by the pandemic and the enormous impact it has had on the aviation industry. Since mid-March 2020 almost all air traffic has been at a standstill and hundreds of airport workers are laid off until further notice. According to Finnair it can take 2-3 years until the business is up and running as it was by the end of 2019. Many companies in the aviation business are fighting for existence and have been aided from governments worldwide. Job security was an important factor for employees before the pandemic, but it is fair to assume that it now has an even greater value for current and potential employees. Aviation has had turbulent times in history also before 2020 and

this fact together with the Covid-19 pandemic could affect potential employees in a way that they would choose some other industry that has better security in regarding job security. Therefore, the author finds it extremely important to keep up the external brand image even in difficult times and to show current and potential employees that “*we are in this together*” which has been an aviation slogan among different companies during this crisis. Also, Biwas & Suar (2016) discuss that perceived organizational support, fair reward system, organizational loyalty, management leadership, the psychological contract and social responsibility of the organization all strongly influence the successfulness of the employer brand. These above-mentioned facts are key elements for company X management to focus on at this time in order to create trust and commitment among employees during this time and to build a strong base for when things will return to normal.

## **6 CONCLUSION**

In this chapter the author will conclude the findings of the study together with the theoretical framework. The author will present an employer brand model for company X that corresponds with the result of the study and previous research. Additionally, the author will discuss limitations with this study and finalize the thesis by giving recommendations for further research.

### **6.1 Employer brand model for company X**

In *figure 8* the employer brand model for company X is designed by the author. The model is based on earlier employer brand theories and highlighted with those aspects that the result of this study indicated where important for current employees in how they perceive the employer brand.

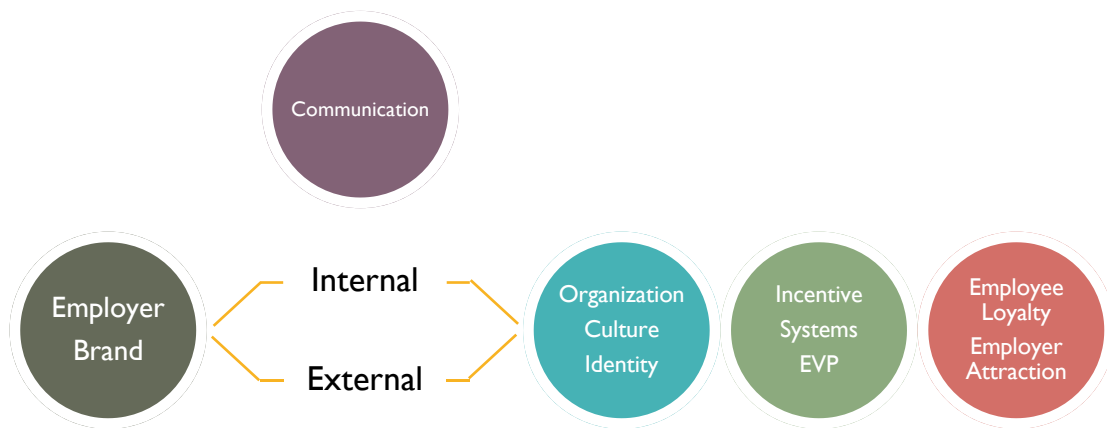


Figure 8. Employer brand model for Company X

The author recommends that communication is the most important pillar for creating the employer brand and should be considered from both internal and external perspectives. With internal communication the author means factors such as; keeping employees up to date with company matters, showing soft values (interest and social aspects), job satisfaction surveys and displaying trust towards employees. The external communication on the other hand presents features that strengthen the employer brand and shows potential employees that company X is a “great place to work”. Management should understand the importance of communicating to the right target groups as Sinclair (2014) says: *“It is by clear, consistent and personal communication of employer brand and company culture that you create brand awareness and interest in your company among the talent you aim to attract”*. External communication contains factors such as:

- Presence on social media (video & pictures)
- Recruitment material i.e. how to write an open position add, where to post open positions (social media, school job boards, job fairs, Oikotie/monster)



- Career page on company X website which the author recommends being updated to include stories from employee brand ambassadors. Overall image of website ought to be updated as well.
- Word-of-mouth (not easy to influence).

Together with communication activities, organization culture and identity must be clearly displayed and understood among management and employees in order to build a strong employer brand. Organization culture is commitment to shared values, purposes, mindsets and behaviour. It is visible in all relationships with colleagues, customers and other stakeholders. Focus should be placed on job reality matters and understanding the work life balance and that it means different things for different employees. From a management perspective organization culture and identity comes from answering the question “*reason for being*” as Sinclair (2014) puts it. Organization culture comes from passion for what you do and this should be highlighted in everyday business. Organization identity is best displayed by its employees who feel wanted and proud working for a specific organization. The overall image of a good work community does wonders for the employer brand both external and internal and gives customers an insight in how work is done in the company and could be beneficial for ground handling deals. It is essential for management to remember that the employees are the companies most valuable asset.

A strong employer brand also covers incentive systems, the EVP. The base for EVP is the psychological agreement between employer and employee where both parties know what is expected from each other. The company should create the “wow” factor for current and potential employees where the employee lifecycle and experience has been discussed. According to Rosethorn (2016) employee segmentation is important to acknowledge since the reason for working for a specific organization means different things to different employees and influence how the EVP is understood. For some it is all about salary and for someone else a “great place to work” with the best colleagues in an international atmosphere. According to Sinclair (2014) the base for the EVP comes from cultural pillars that come from organization culture and the EVP comes to life by regular cultural activities to cultural pillars. Cultural activities can be anything from a Christmas party to giving a rose to every woman in the company on women’s day. All

small and big actions that make the work community and shows that every single employee is cared about.

When all above mentioned themes are considered and a strong employer brand is built it reflects on loyal employees and attracts the best talent for open positions. Employee loyalty and satisfaction can be measured every few years to see if things are on track and what should be changed. Also, the EVP should be refreshed every 4-5 years as Mosley (2014) says. Nevertheless, one should remember that creating the employer brand is not a one-man job and contribution is needed from all stakeholders; CEO, HR-, marketing- and communication departments.

## **6.2 Limitations**

This study was limited to conduct a research of the employer brand among a ground handling company operating at Helsinki-Vantaa airport and only focusing on employees working for the company in Finland even though the company is international.

This limitation has been done in order to narrow the research area to one industry and one geographical location in order to give the reader a truthful insight in the topic from a Finnish perspective, especially at Helsinki-Vantaa airport. However, the literature overview referred to theory and research done on a worldwide basis in order to understand the theory behind employer branding.

Since the study was directed to one company the result cannot be generalized to cover all ground handling companies operating at Helsinki-Vantaa airport. Even though the author believes that the result would be similar at all the ground handling companies operating at Helsinki-Vantaa airport. The airport environment and lifestyle it brings is really exceptional and therefore the author would not generalize the result as such to other businesses although similarities might be found.

The error in the survey did not affect the trustworthiness of the result according to the author, because the specific employer brand questions were not affected by the error and

the result was compared to those background questions that were not affected by the error. Consequently the analysis of the result had to be narrowed down since the author did not want to use statistic for the questions that were affected by the survey error (gender, education and years at company X) since it might have given an abnormal result to use those answers since the question was not shown to a large number of respondents.

### **6.3 Recommendations for future research**

The author believes that creating and maintaining the employer brand will be a key topic also in the future. Therefore, the author recommends further research around the subject. It would be interesting to conduct the same study for all ground handling companies operating at Helsinki-Vantaa airport in order to investigate if all ground handling workers perceive the employer brand in the same way or if there are differences between companies. The author also suggests that the study should be repeated after the Covid-19 epidemic to see if it changed how employees and applicants perceive the employer brand. As mentioned, aviation is a turbulent industry and it would be interesting to study if workforce keeps being loyal to the industry or finding other employers in a less turbulent industry.

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## APPENDICES

1.

### Reliability analysis of purified 25-item Employer Attractiveness (EmpAt) scale

Item:

*How important are the following to you when considering potential employers?*

1. Recognition/appreciation from management
2. A fun working environment
3. A springboard for future employment
4. Feeling good about yourself as a result of working for a particular organisation
5. Feeling more self-confident as a result of working for a particular organization
6. Gaining career-enhancing experience
7. Having a good relationship with your superiors
8. Having a good relationship with your colleagues
9. Supportive and encouraging colleagues
10. Working in an exciting environment
11. Innovative employer – novel work practices/forward-thinking
12. The organisation both values and makes use of your creativity
13. The organisation produces high-quality products and services
14. The organisation produces innovative products and services
15. Good promotion opportunities within the organization
16. Humanitarian organisation – gives back to society
17. Opportunity to *apply* what was learned at a tertiary institution
18. Opportunity to teach others what you have learned
19. Acceptance and belonging
20. The organisation is customer-orientated
21. Job security within the organization
22. Hands-on inter-departmental experience
23. Happy work environment
24. An above average basic salary
25. An attractive *overall* compensation package



## **7 TUTKIMUS TYÖNANTAJAMIELIKUVAN KEHITTÄMISESTÄ**

Tervetuloa tutkimukseen, joka kartoittaa työnantajamielikuvan vaikutusta osana rekrytointiprosessia. Tämä tutkimus on tärkeä osa YAMK lopputyötäni ja tarkoituksena on hyödyntää tutkimuksen tuloksia yrityksemme toiminnan kehittämisessä.

Tutkimus sisältää 10 kysymystä ja vastaaminen kestää noin 5 minuuttia. Tutkimus koostuu väittämistä ja avoimesta kysymyksestä. Vastauksia käytetään anonymisti ainoastaan tähän tutkimukseen ja niitä säilytetään kevääseen 2020 saakka, jolloin tutkimus valmistuu.

Kiitos osallistumisestasi ja arvokkaasta ajastasi, joka auttaa tutkimuksen valmistumisessa!

There are 10 questions in this survey.

### **7.1 Taustatiedot**

#### **Sukupuoli**

##### **7.1.1 \***

Valitse sopiva vaihtoehto

Valitse **vain yksi** seuraavista:

- Nainen
- Mies

- Muu

### 7.1.2 Ikä \*

Valitse sopiva vaihtoehto

Valitse **vain yksi** seuraavista:

- Alle 20
- 20-29
- 30-39
- 40-49
- 50-59
- Yli 60

### 7.1.3 Koulutus \*

Valitse sopiva vaihtoehto

Valitse **vain yksi** seuraavista:

- Peruskoulu
- Lukio/Ammattikoulu
- Korkeakoulututkinto (AMK)
- Ylempi korkeakoulututkinto (Yliopisto / YAMK)
- Muu

### 7.1.4 Kuinka kauan olet ollut töissä nykyisessä yrityksessä? \*

Valitse sopiva vaihtoehto

Valitse **vain yksi** seuraavista:

- Alle vuoden
- 1-3 vuotta
- 3-5 vuotta
- 5-10 vuotta
- Yli 10 vuotta

### 7.1.5 Osasto jossa olet töissä \*

Valitse sopiva vaihtoehto

Valitse **vain yksi** seuraavista:

- Matkustajapalvelu
- Ramp

## 7.2 Työnantajamielikuvaa mittaavat kysymykset

**Kuinka tärkeitä alla olevat väittämät ovat sinulle mietittäessä työnantajaa?**

**1=Ei yhtään tärkeä, 2=Jokseenkin tärkeä, 3=En välitä asiasta, 4=Tärkeä, 5=Erittäin tärkeä**

### 7.2.1 \*

Valitse sopivin vaihtoehto:

	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Johdolta saamasi arvostus ja tunnustus</b>					
<b>Hauska työympäristö</b>					
<b>Työ tarjoaa ponnahduslaudan tulevaisuuden työtehtäviin</b>					
<b>Työskentely kyseiselle yritykselle lisää hyvän olon tunnettasi</b>					
<b>Työskentely kyseiselle yritykselle kasvattaa itseluottamustasi</b>					
<b>Yritys tarjoaa työuraa edistävää työkokemusta</b>					
<b>Hyvät välit esimiesten kanssa</b>					
<b>Hyvät välit kollegoiden kanssa</b>					

**Kuinka tärkeitä alla olevat väittämät ovat sinulle mietittäessä työnantajaa?**

**1=Ei yhtään tärkeä, 2=Jokseenkin tärkeä, 3=En välitä asiasta, 4=Tärkeä, 5=Erittäin tärkeä**

### 7.2.2 \*

Valitse sopivin vaihtoehto:

	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Kollegat tukevat ja rohkaisevat</b>					

	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Työympäristö on mielenkiintoinen</b>					
<b>Työnantaja on innovatiivinen - uusia työskentelytapoja/työtä edistävää ajattelua</b>					
<b>Yritys arvostaa ja hyödyntää luovuuttasi</b>					
<b>Yritys tuottaa korkealaatuisia tuotteita ja palveluita</b>					
<b>Yritys tuottaa innovatiivisia tuotteita ja palveluita</b>					
<b>Hyvät etenemismahdollisuudet yrityksen sisällä</b>					
<b>Humanitaarinen yritys – yritys joka antaa takaisin yhteiskunnalle</b>					

**Kuinka tärkeitä alla olevat väittämät ovat sinulle mietittäessä työnantajaa?**

**1=Ei yhtään tärkeä, 2=Jokseenkin tärkeä, 3=En välitä asiasta, 4=Tärkeä, 5=Erittäin tärkeä**

### **7.2.3 \***

Valitse sopivin vaihtoehto:

	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Mahdollisuus hyödyntää oppeja, jotka on saatu kolmannen asteen* opinnoista (*lukion/ammattikoulun jälkeiset opinnot)</b>					
<b>Mahdollisuus opettaa muille itse oppimia asioita</b>					
<b>Työyhteisöön kuulumisen ja hyväksyntä</b>					
<b>Yritys on asiakaslähtöinen/asiakasorientoitunut</b>					
<b>Työsuhdeturva yrityksessä/todennäköisyys työsuhteen pysyvyyden</b>					
<b>Käytännönläheinen työkokemus eri osastojen välillä</b>					

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

**Iloinen työympäristö**  
**Keskimääräistä parempi peruspalkka**  
**Houkutteleva kokonaisvaltainen**  
**työetuuspaketti**

**Välittykö yrityksestä jossa olet töissä positiivinen  
työnantajakuva?**

**1=Täysin eri mieltä, 2=Jokseenkin eri mieltä, 3=En samaa enkä  
eri mieltä, 4=Jokseenkin samaa mieltä, 5=Täysin samaa mieltä**

#### **7.2.4 \***

Valitse **vain yksi** seuraavista:

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

### **7.3 Avoin kysymys**

#### **7.3.1 Muutamalla lauseella kuvaile miksi valitsit nykyisen työnantajan?**

Vastauksesi:

**Kiitos vastauksistasi ja mukavaa kevään odotusta!**  
02.02.2020 – 21:38

Lähetä vastaukset.  
Kiitos vastauksistasi!

3.

**Open question answers why employee chose current employer (in Finnish)**

"Loppui edellinen työ,joten jotain oli keksittävä."

"Itse työ sekä työyhteisö on mielekästä. Kaikista kilpailevista yrityksistä miellän nykyisen työnantajan parhaaksi laadultaan."

"Kaveri suositteli."

"Suppeasta valikoimasta valittuna tämä tuntui "kotoisimmalta"

"Vastaa omaa alaa ja jokseenkin koulutusta.  
Lentoasema on mielenkiintoinen & kansainvälinen miljöö työympäristönä, mikä tarjoaa mahdollisuuksia ja suhteita eri toimijoihin."

"mukava työporukka ja laaja asiakasportfolio, tunnettuus, uudet haasteet."

"Mielenkiintoinen, mahdollisuudet, avoin ja matala organisaatio, hyvät työkaverit"

"Työkokemus ja uralla eteenpäin."

"Työ vastasi koulutusta. Ystävä joka oli aloittanut aikaisemmin yrityksessä kertoi, että haetaan lisää henkilökuntaa."

"Vanhemmat pakotti kesätöihin ja tänne pääsin."

"Sattuma toi tänne töihin aikanaan, naapuri oli samaan aikaan kusettamassa koiraansa ja kerroin että tarvitsen duunia hän järjesti haastattelun ja sillä tiellä ollaan"

"Yritys vaikutti tuolloin luotettavalta työnantajalta."

"Suhteiden kautta ajauin tänne."

"Mielenkiintoinen työympäristö ja kilpailukykyinen palkka."

"sattumaa, etsivät työntekijöitä lentokentälle, jonne halusin töihin"

"Mielenkiintoinen, tiivis ympäristö"

"Mielenkiintoisuus, kansainvälisyys, monipuolisuus, asiakaspalvelu"

"Lentoala ja mielekkäät työajat tai niitä seuraavat ns ylimääräiset vapaapäivät."

"Työtä ympäristössä jossa olen aina viihtynyt / viihdyn"

"Sattuma/vinkki kaverilta"

"Kaipasin fyysisempää työtä ja parempaa palkkaa sekä uusia työkavereita."

"Nykyisellä yrityksellä oli rekrytointi ja kiinnostavat asiakkuudet."

"Sain aikoinaan enemmän tunteja sopimukseen, kuin aiemmalta kilpailevalta työnantajaltani"

"En osaa sanoa"

"Silloisessa tilanteessa ei ollut mahdollisuuksia parempaan, myös aikaisemmin olleet lentoedut olivat iso tekijä."

"Työharjoittelu piti suorittaa lentokentällä, tämä yritys tuli vastaan."

"edellinen työnantaja lopetti ja piti saada uusi työ minulle tutu firma ja hyvässä maineessa joten otin ensiksi yhteyttä nykyiseen firmaan"

"Työkaverit."

"Mahdollisti työnteon spesifillä osaamisalueella."

"Olin kuullut siitä hyvää"

"Muutamia ystäviä työskentelee yrityksessä joten ajattelin kysyä myös itse töitä sieltä."

"Entinen työnantajani oli niin huono että mikä tahansa muu työ/työnantaja olisi parempi. Nyt oltuani yli 2v yrityksessä, on todellakin selvää että nykyinen työnantajani on kiinnostunut myös työntekijöistään toisin kuin edellinen"

"Ala mielenkiintoinen"

"Ystävän kautta/suosittamana tulin töihin. Olin kuullut hyvää työpaikasta ja palkkakin oli ihan hyvä."

"Pyysivät töihin"